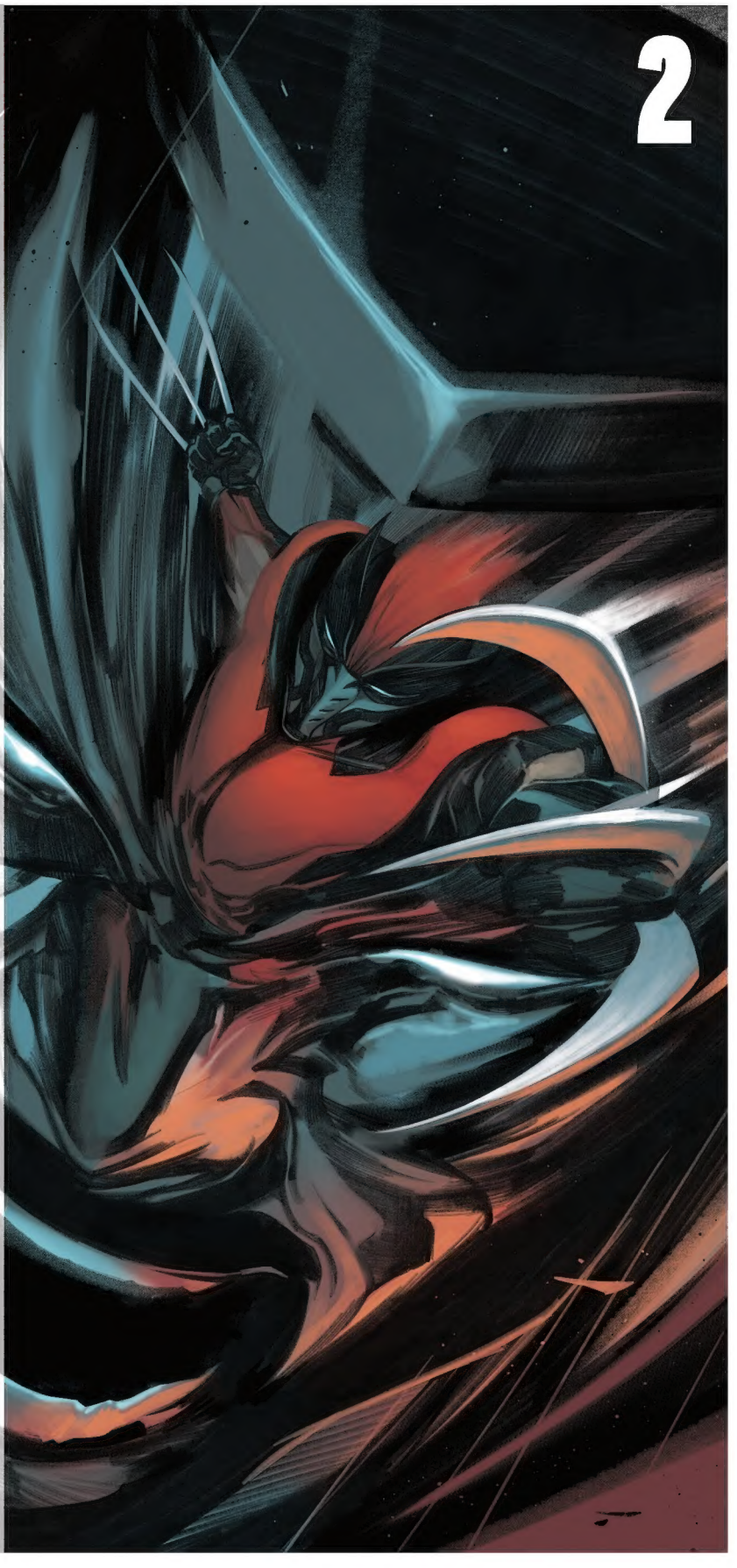
MARVEL

ULTIMATE WOLVERINE

2



CONDON
CAPPUCCIO | VALENZA

FEB. 2025 | RATED T+ | $4.99 US

Thirty years ago. The North American Union.
My proposed weapons project has been postponed once again pending further analysis...
Bureaucrats...
Still, our initial findings have yielded results that may be useful--though our first adamantium-infused subject, Weapon Alpha, died within minutes of the procedure...
My small, but devoted, staff and I have discovered a remarkable number of individuals with abilities beyond our own living among us in secret.
"Mutants," so called, the rumored "Homo superior." Our potential subjects...
Some of these individuals have the ability to heal themselves, others, a supernaturally heightened agility.
We do not know their full potential. With the pending approval from the Department of--

CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
Very good, professor.
Who's that?
Who's there?
I am but a simple man...in search of a better world.
There's no such thing as a perfect world.
A better world, professor. Better.

What are you doing in here? No one's supposed to be here, and...and I've never seen you before...
What's your clearance?
Clearance?
This...is my clearance.
Guk!
SHLLLLK

You see, professor...
KRTSH
...I am making this a better world.
And a better world...
...is one that you're not in.

The Eurasian Taiga.
Now.

There! UP THERE!

"And what if someone else gets in that *puppet* brain of his?"

What then?
Impossible.
Make no mistake, Leaders Rasputin and Leader Rossovich...he is ours.
How can you be so sure? We are not the only ones with telepaths at our disposal... Perhaps the project should be... terminated.
Terminated? We've sent him on four missions already. Four successful missions.
The Opposition is reeling, Leaders. He eliminated several top operatives last month on our western border--alone.
Successful missions are a dime a dozen, Dr. Prostovich. Just like your other... creations.
What does that mean?
I am tasked with certain directives and I accomplish them. I fail to understand why I am defending myself when--
"He has no memories." You say this. You have said this time and again. But how do you explain what happens when your little Winter Soldier sleeps?
Oh, you didn't think I knew? Well, perhaps it is time we check in on your project to see for ourselves how well he is doing...

Ah! Perfect. Suffering a night terror as we speak.
Whoa--
As--excuse me--as with any normal being, this is a regenerative cycle. Restorative. He is dreaming.
Hnn-- Hff-- Nnnnn--
SKLLLK
Would I prefer him to be inert? Yes, of course.
But this is not an exact science. It takes time, testing--
Lives?
Nn--
He is mostly docile while awake. He obeys, we just--
Leader, he is in stasis. To rip him out suddenly would be potentially--
Remove the specimen. I want to inspect it myself.
Do not underestimate how disposable you are, doctor. Remove the specimen. Now.
Y-yes, Leader.

Okay...okay. Vitals are reading...normal. Winter Soldier, shag vpered.
KRAK-KRAK
He responds to verbal commands when prefaced with designation. Otherwise, he may react, let's say poorly, out of--
Dr. Prostovich...do not dictate how I may interact with my own property. I know how to handle creatures like this. It is not with verbal commands.

Creatures like this...*men* like this...they know *violence*. They respect it.
Because unlike you, men like this know there is no such thing as *safe*. Every second of existence, there is someone or something trying to *take from you*.
And men like this? They know that men like *me* stand in their way. If you don't crush them, if you don't show them your power--your *true* power--they *will* resist.
It is inevitable, doctor. After all, he has done so before. So we will *reinforce* the lesson...the Winter Soldier's rightful place...
...is under our heel.

I think we should like to see the Winter Soldier in action. No more reports. We want to *see*. Illyana, Arkady?
Yes. A *test*. Dr. Prostovich should like that. She loves her *tests*.
We will send ten of our finest soldiers to pursue the Winter Soldier in a combat scenario, fully monitored. Only one shall emerge.
Excellent...
KRAK
It will not only be a test for your *subject* but for *you* too, doctor. Fail, and we shall *revise* your relationship with Directorate X.
...Yes, Leader.
Thank God they're gone. What a mess... Come, Winter Soldier...
...na tvoikh nogakh. You have a *new* mission ahead of you.

BRAKABRAKA
BRAKABRAKABRAKA
Komarov-- he's dead.
HOLD! Hold your fire.
Is this the Opposition? Is that who's out there? Anyone get a good look at them?
Not them. Him. One man.
And he didn't look like the Opposition...

What? It's got to be the Opposition though, no?
I thought--
I saw him.
He looked like...it sounds silly, but my babushka told stories when I was little of a creature in the woods. Leshy. The forest spirit. If you disturb the forest...
I saw it too. Only for a second. It was running like an animal. On all fours...
Like a demon...
What the hell are we dealing with?
It is no monster... no demon or forest spirit...
It's the "Winter Soldier."

That's a myth...
Did a myth just slice Komarov's face off? If that's true, myths are getting *pretty dangerous* these days...
But I...I thought...rumors were Winter Soldier was one of our men? A tool of the Eurasian Republic's leadership...
Perhaps he is.
Then why is he hunting us?
Perhaps you should be asking why ***we're*** hunting ***him.*** If he is one of us, then the only reason for us to be here is simple...
...we're *practice.*
They're *filming us?* Why?

So remember that, comrades...
...it's him or us. And if it's us, we had better put on a good show.
SNIKT
SNIKT

BRAKABRAKABRAKA
NO--
N-NO!!!
GOD, NO!

Ah... Krasivy...
Yes... beautiful indeed.
TO BE CONTINUED...

TOP SECRET
SPECIAL HANDLING

Memorandum for Ministry of Defense

SUBJECT: **OPERATION TAIGA**

1. Ldrs. Rasputin & Ldr. Rossovich request that a small detail of highly trained personnel be deployed to the Taiga region [redacted] to terminate **UNKNOWN TARGET** (UT), possibly of Opposition origin. Operation Taiga should commence immediately with extreme prejudice. UT is armed and extremely dangerous; upon contact, UT is to be eliminated—absolutely no prisoners will be tolerated. The remains of UT are to be destroyed immediately following termination.

2. Ldr. Rossovich & Ldr. I. Rasputin have requested these individuals be considered for the operation, based on recent training credentials:

   Komarov, R.
   Elevich, A.
   Vikhrov, E.
   Tokarev, P.
   Khorkina, E.
   Galiyeva, V.
   Grosheva, P.
   Paseka, M.
   Ratkovic, N.
   Vernadsky, Y.

   Alternate individuals considered for **OPERATION TAIGA** must be submitted to Ldrs. Rasputin & Ldr. Rossovich as well as Min. Kulik for approval. As this operation is URGENT, it is requested that alternates be at a minimum.

3. Further, **OPERATION TAIGA** serves to ensure the integrity and stability of the Eurasian Republic against combatants, both foreign and domestic. This operation, though discreet, is of utmost importance to the Ministry of Defense and the Eurasian Republic as a whole and should be treated accordingly.

SIGNED

GENERAL NIKOLAI KULIK, MINISTER OF DEFENSE

DirectorateX [Version 2.01]

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TRANSCRIPTION OF PRIVATE DICTATION LOGS OF DR. ALONYA PROSTOVICH, DIRECTOR OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY FOR ARCHIVAL PURPOSES

CLASSIFIED

ENTRY X-25069

It is cold in this office. Leave it to the Eurasian Republic's leaders to cut heating in their very own building during a winter freeze… I will have to remember to submit a request.

The Rasputins have been unusually skeptical of my Winter Soldier program, culminating in a confrontation in the Winter Soldier lab. This is all baseless, of course, as the Winter Soldier has shown nothing but unbridled success on every mission he has been deployed on, including that incredibly effective raid of the Opposition base at St. Michael's last month. Though the other missions were less memorable, they were no less successful.

Leader Illyana in particular seems to despise the Winter Soldier himself…though perhaps her distaste has more to do with her disdain for me and my methods. Where Leader Piotr—and Leader Rossovich, I might add—sees an asset to further the Republic's cause, Leader Illyana sees a threat to her power. I will not disguise my displeasure with her and her childish attitudes toward governance and leadership—I have spoken tersely to her myself, albeit within reason. I do not wish to feel the wrath of her sword, as my predecessor did.

Perhaps she is jealous of my success… Under her watchful eye, the Opposition has arisen. Under mine, it has seen defeat after defeat.

I fear that Leader Illyana's reluctance to accept the program puts it in jeopardy—and worse, I fear that this will put the entirety of Directorate X in jeopardy. Leader Piotr seemed to be entertaining her position, which led directly to the confrontation in the lab that I had mentioned briefly before. Of course, Winter Soldier remained docile despite the hostilities, as he has been programmed with several measures to ensure that—at minimum—he never attacks Leaders Illyana, Piotr or Rossovich. Or myself, for that matter. This includes the use of code phrases that effectively shut him off like a machine—known only to me. He may be a living specimen, but he is truly no different than one of the X-S modules I have been testing. And like them, he is mine.

What saved Winter Soldier from further torment was a proposition: The Leaders wish to see Winter Soldier in action against a formidable foe. We could have programmed Sentinels, or the new X-S modules, to combat him, perhaps even programmed a new Opasnaya Komnata scenario, but…

They have decided to create a false operation in the Eurasian Taiga. They fear that the soldiers will hold back if they know it is a test of a Republic asset. So they have falsified an entire series of documents and misled the Ministry of Defense to believe it is deploying its best troops—handpicked by our Leaders—to kill a possible Opposition foe.

The forest will be rigged with cameras, and Winter Soldier will be released hours before with similar mission parameters: kill the opposition.

The Leaders believe this is a formidable task—one that will test Winter Soldier's keen skills in battle against the Eurasian Republic's most fearsome—and fearless—soldiers.

However, they do not know what I do…

These soldiers are dead before their feet ever touch the ground.

END DICTATION.